

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application.

Listing Of Claims:

Claims 1 - 13. (Cancelled).

Claim 14. (Currently Amended): A silicon nitride material comprising:

- (a) sintering aids including at least Al_2O_3 ;[[,]] and
- (b) silicon dioxide;[[,]]
the sintering aids and silicon dioxide being present in a grain boundary phase;[[,]] and
- (c) an additive that is retained as a disperse phase, said additive being selected from the group consisting of SiC, TiN, TiCN, HfO_2 and combinations thereof.

wherein the silicon dioxide in the grain boundary phase and the sintering aids including at least Al_2O_3 in the grain boundary phase have a molar ratio of silicon dioxide to silicon dioxide and sintering aids including at least Al_2O_3 that is $> 65\%$, and the silicon nitride material has a silicon oxide nitride content that is $< 1\%$ by weight.

Claim 15. (Previously Presented): The silicon nitride material of Claim 14, wherein the material further comprises a sintering aid selected from the group consisting of Y_2O_3 , Sc_2O_3 , rare earth metal oxides, and alkaline earth metal oxides.

Claim 16. (Previously Presented): The silicon nitride material of Claim 14, wherein the sintering aids and the silicon dioxide are present at an amount so that the grain boundary phase is $< 20\%$ by volume.

Claim 17. (Previously Presented): The silicon nitride material of Claim 14, wherein the sintering aids and the silicon dioxide are present at an amount so that the grain boundary phase is from 0.1 to 17% by volume.

Claim 18. (Previously Presented): The silicon nitride material of Claim 14, wherein the sintering aids and the silicon dioxide are present at an amount so that the grain boundary phase is from 3 to 15% by volume.

Claim 19. (Previously Presented): The silicon nitride material of Claim 14, wherein the material further comprises a reactive additive.

Claim 20. (Previously Presented): The silicon nitride material of Claim 19, wherein the reactive additive is selected from the group consisting of TiO_2 , WO_3 and MoO_3 .

Claim 21. (Cancelled).

Claim 22. (Cancelled).

Claim 23. (Previously Presented): The silicon nitride material of Claim 14, wherein the material has a porosity that is $< 2\%$, by volume.